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NARRATOR Mildred S. Franzina

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE Solvang

DATE Oct. 1, 1987.

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Interview with Mildred Streeter Franzina
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Date of Interview: 1 October 1987, Solvang, CA

PL: Introduction. I know that you and your husband have deep roots here in Santa Barbara County, so would you begin by telling me about your husband, John Franzina?

Mrs. F: He was born May 22, 1895 on the mountain of Rufugio. His parents worked on the ranch below near the river. This is going to be hard for me because I don't know much about his early years. The ranch was owned by the Murphys, but I do not know any more about that time. Johnnie's mother died when he was just a small child and there was nothing to hold the children together, as he was so young.

PL: How many children in the family?

Mrs. F: Seven children, two were born in Switzerland before they came to California. Mrs. Palmyra Murphy was the first child born in America, then John, and then the other three. Only Palmyra Murphy is now alive. The father came from a farming background, he had a dairy business for a long time in Switzerland. John left home at 15 to work and live with a farming family named Campbell who had ranched in Happy Canyon, but then went to live in Madera, and John went with them. He worked and made his own way from that time until the first World War started and he enlisted. In 1916 he went to

Europe and was there two years. He was with the California Grizzlies, organized by the author, Stewart Edward White, all these boys were from California. It was part of the regular army but a group of California boys. When he came home his brother got in touch with John, and asked if he would come back to the Santa Ynez Valley.

PL: Did Mr. Franzina ever talk to you about his war experiences?

Mrs. F: No, he may have but when you get to be 89 years old, you forget things. He was not the type of person to talk about himself. He lived in the present not in the past. He was interested in the now. After he was discharged, he came back here. His brother was unhappy with the home situation and wanted to go to Texas so asked John to come. This ranch that he worked on belonged originally to the Brinkerhoff Family of Santa Barbara, and then to a man named Bradley, who lived in Las Angeles. John rented the land from Mr. Bradley for 20 years of more. 1920-1940. It was cattle and farming. John raised hay for the live stock, there was a home there and all the necessary things. We were married in 1940 and lived there for 2 years.

PL: How did you meet your husband?

Mrs. F: I had known him for ten years before, when my first husband and I lived in Happy Canyon. My first husband and I lived there for ten years and during cattle

roundups everyone was invited to come and help and food was provided after work. On the roundups the work was branding and rounding up the cattle. After I married John he bought property from Ray Tunnell on Figueroa Mountain.

PL: You ranched on the Tunnell place?

Mrs. F: We did not live up there but had a home on Baseline Ave. in Ballard. John had a single man living up on the ranch to look after things. John was up there every week, but we did have a man to watch out for things. This was up on Figueroa Mts. passed Midland School, up the grade past the guard station, the forest service. The road was very rough, now it much better. We ran cattle on Forest Service land too. In order to run cattle on forest land you have to own property adjoining the forest lands. After John bought the Tunnell place he bought another 160 acres from a man named Carlberg, which was about 3 miles from the main property. This gave him more acreage which included down Manzana Creek and as far as the Sisquoc Ranch. At Manzana Creek the cattle could not graze any farther, as there is a falls there and ends in a canyon.

PL: You had good years and bad years?

Mrs. F: Mostly good years. We didn't have too much trouble. With less rainfall there was less feed on the land. On forest land you pay by the head you graze. They regulate it very well. Most cattle men know how much

land will sustain one cow or steer. We ran 75 head there on the amount of land we had at that time.

PL: How were the cattle moved when it was market time?

Mrs. F: They were trucked out and usually there were cattle buyers who came in and made you an offer. After the sales yard was started north of Buellton, on Hwy. 101 we would take the cattle there to sell. After John passed away it was very convenient for me, as I took over the business and did the roundups and hauling. This was for seven years. John died May 2, 1957 from cancer. He was the type of person who did not complain and he would not say anything. It effected his spine, his back collapsed and he was at Cottage Hospital for two and a half months. He had a good life, he was the type of person who made a good life, there were ups and downs. When you start out in business for yourself, no financial backing, had to do it on your own there are ups and downs. He did go to the bank for loans but it was hard to start up. He was very well liked and an out going person. He established his credit.

PL: What sort of entertainment did you enjoy in those years?

Mrs. F: He liked picnics, he would invite his friends up especially when it was cattle branding time, we had lots of friends. One year when our daughter was 8 years old, we visited with his brother in Texas, things like that.

PL: What year was your daughter born?

Mrs. F: 1942, July. Her name is Mary Lee Franzina Tognazini. She has two children, this year they are both in college, so I don't see them as often as I'd like. The oldest is Lisa and she was outstanding in her high school class at Righetti, third highest scholastically in her class and is now at Cal. Poly, San Luis. John just graduated from high school this June and is now at Cal Poly, San Luis. He was named for his grandfather and his father, John Anthony. I insisted on that. They could not decide on a name so I suggested those two names.

PL: After Mr. Franzina died, you took over the cattle operation?

Mrs. F: It was just left in my hands, there was nothing else to be done. It was a small operation and it had to be worked economically, and I knew what to do. My oldest daughter and her husband came over three or four times a year and would help me at branding time.

PL: Where on Baseline were you living?

Mrs. F: 2881 Baseline Ave. Next door to Dr. John Carricaburu. Just west of Regugio Road. I would go up Figueroa two or three times a week. There were always people up there and no one bothered it but you had to check. Later we built a house on the place, but in the beginning the cabin was too small for all of us to stay. My daughter and her husband had lived in Visalia and were in the dairy business. They would come over and

they had two daughters so there was no room to stay in the cabin. My son-in-law suggested we build a house, he knew some people to buy lumber from and they trucked it over and he did the carpenter work. It took only a month to build the house so we then could all stay up. Dorothy is my daughter, and Lynn is my son-in-law. When no one seemed interested in buying the land they suggested I go ahead and put some cabins there. One day after we had finished branding, Lynn suggested that I start a recreation area up there and I told him, why don't you buy me out and start a recreation project? Later he called me and said he would take my offer. He bought me out, they sold their place in Visalia and came here and started living in the house we had built up on Figueroa, they are doing very well there.

PL: Now, I would like to ask you about the Streeter Family?

Mrs. F: This starts quite a while ago, when my Mother's father and his mother and sister came to California in 1852. They had left with a group from Illinois and went to the east coast, steamer for California, went to Panama and there was a railroad part way across the Isthmus, then you traveled the rest of the way by mule back. They started from Sept. 1852 from Quincy, Ill. and came to Monterey. It took three months to make the trip. My Great grandfather had come to California in 1850 and she had come to be with him. The methods of communication were pretty slow, so my Great grandmother traveled with a

group. She had her two children with her, the boy was my grandfather. One of the group she traveled with kept a diary and my daughters have copies of that. They were to go to Sana Cruz where my great grandfather was to meet them, but the boat had to go to Monterey. When they arrived, her husband was not there to meet them so they traveled to Santa Cruz by stage caoch and he was not there either. People had told her he had started walking for Monterey but no one had seen him since. Some time later they found his body, and he had been shot. Probably for money but no one ever knew. It was supposed to be a robbery because he had sold some property a few days before. He did not carry the money with him as he had put it in the bank. He had built a house for the family so my great grandmother had a house and money in the bank to get along with. There is a blank in there as to what she did until she remarried, and my grandfather was grown up. My Mother's mother had come from the mid-west, their name was Hunt and they came to California to look for gold, the others were not seeking gold. The Hunts came across the Donner Pass the year after the Donner Tragedy, you remember that story. The Hunts settled in Gilroy and Watsonville. Grandmother and grandfather were very young when the married, Grandmother Hunt was 17, and Grandfather Gifford was 19. They farmed there and then came to Lompoc in 1875 to settle with the new colony.

FL: Do you suppose it was because of the element of Temperance that the Giffords came to Lompoc?

Mrs. F: Partly and because the land was for sale and the organizing of a new town. There were others that they knew from northern Cal. that were coming. They had not owned land in Gilroy. This was a chance to get land but when they got here and found out what they had to do to clear the land, because it was full of willows and scrub, and it was going to cost so much to clear, they leased property in Santa Rita, east of Lompoc and were there a number of years.

FL: Where does the Streeter Family come into this?

Mrs. F: My Mother was seven years old when they came to Lompoc and Santa Rita, and across the road was the Streeter Family. They had come a few years before to Santa Rita, and my Mother's brothers went to Santa Rita School.

End of Side 1, Tape 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

The Streeters were living there. My Mother's name was Adabelle Gifford, and my father was Charles Wilson Streeter. The Wilson came from my Grandmother Streeter, who was a Wilson. They came from Wisconsin about the same time as the other settlers. On that trip west anyone over 16 had to walk the trail so Grandmother

walked all the way west over the Oregon Trail to the Oregon Coast. She said she wore out a good many pair of shoes before she got there.

My father was born in Potter Valley, Mendocino County Ca. They came to Lompoc because my grandfather had heart trouble and the doctor told him to get away from that area. My grandfather had several brothers and one of them came here later and lived here quite a while.

PL: Why did they choose the Santa Rita area to farm?

Mrs. F: This area was cleared, no willows, no scrub. Lompoc Valley had fertile land, but it took several years to clear and they only had horses to do the work. It was costly there because of that but they had good land, and still do.

PL: There has always been a problem in the Santa Rita with lack of water, did your father or grandfather put down deep wells?

Mrs. F: No, but across the valley there was an area where you could dig with a shovel and bucket and get water about 35 to 40 feet down. It was across the valley and the man who owned the property was very generous and sold my father a little piece of property at the water area to dig a well. They put in a well and that pressure pumped water to our tank house. It was sort of down hill and ran to the holding tank. That place is still there, and is probably a spring as it is very soft water, and that was the only place in Santa Rita that they had water

close and accessible.

PL: When were your parents married?

Mrs. F: Nov. 1, 1892 and my father died Oct. 16, 1954. There were two boys and four girls in the family. All were born at home except my youngest sister Lucille, who was born in Lompoc at a lying in home. There was no hospital in Lompoc. In 1905 my next sister was born in Walterville, Oregon.

PL: Why did your parents move from Santa Rita?

Mrs. F: It was because of dry years, he went broke. He was buying the piece of property that Frank Acin owns now. Three years of dry years, and 1898 was the driest, Dad said there was not enough rain to sprout the seed and he had had a short year the year before too. He could not support his horses to work the land. So in the early spring of 1898 he took all but one horse, left for Mother, and went with several other people to Hanford, CA. where Miller and Lux were just putting in their canal system, so they worked their horses on that project. They stayed until the fall. They were paid enough to feed their horses, a dollar a day, room and board. Mother stayed at home and I was born in July of that year. My father always laughed and kidded me, saying that all he had to show for 1898 was me! In 1900 we went to Oregon, all the family in a wagon, furniture and all. There were four children at this time. We went as far as LaMoore, as Dad could work his

horses along the way on the first step, and made some money as we went. We arrived in Oregon about the first of November. We had family there, but I don't remember much about that trip.

On the trip back to Santa Rita, I remember more things. When we came over the Cascade Mountains, we had only one wagon on the trip back, there was a spring of water that we stopped at, and someone had put up a statue of a little bear holding an umbrella, and the water was coming out of the umbrella and that impressed me at seven years old. Mother fed us by a little square iron stove that had legs that came off when not in use, and a stove pipe, she made all the meals and wood was close by. We just camped out. When we stopped we put up the tent and made up the beds. If we went through a town Mother would buy provisions. It was hard on her, my sister was only seven months old. She never complained but she never went camping after that. After we came back to the Lompoc and Santa Rita area Dad worked on the thrashing machines. Grandfather was still alive then so we came back there. We rented a house in Lompoc and went to school, we didn't miss much school. After being in Lompoc for some months we moved back to Santa Rita. Grandfather died the next year and Dad bought the original home place there.

PL: Do you remember any of the teacher's name that taught at Santa Rita School?

Mrs. F: Miss Kerns was one, she later married Will Saner, a prosperous rancher in the Lompoc Valley, and Luzina McDonald was another teacher, and Fern Andress, and Mrs. Saunders, who had a family near by. And there were others that I can't remember. There was no high school available for us, it was 8 miles one way to Lompoc and we had no transportation. My oldest sister was out of school and also my two brothers at about the same time. We were needed on the ranch.

Tularosa Hill was even steeper than today, they put black top on the road but the horses feet would slip from under them on that hill as they took the beans into into Lompoc. I worked very hard on the ranch. My oldest sister was 8 years older and she went to work as a helper in the home of a neighbor, my brothers were helping on the ranch because Dad bought more land and more horses. He was prospering until more dry years came along. In the fall and winter my Dad and brothers were all plowing together, each with a team of 6 horses, so there was 18 head of horses working and having to feed. It took them many months to get the land ready, then plant the seed and cultivate and weed. In September you used a pitch fork to throw the beans or hay into the wagons. I would drive one of the wagons. My oldest brother went into the Navy, so I was needed. This was the first World War. The warehouse was in Lompoc. The bean buyers were Bob Lilley's father and a

Mr. Lehman and we took the beans to the warehouse where they were cleaned and stored.

PL: Are there any of the old timers of Santa Rita still living there today?

Mrs. F: Cecil Flo, he was a very little boy then, and Gertie Campbell. Gertie did not come in here until 1910 or 12. Ethyl was a little younger than my youngest sister, that's Irving Flo's wife, she is a cousin, her father was my father's brother. One of the things that changed so much was the motorization of farming, but they still plant beans today and that's about all that will grow in that area.

PL: How did you meet your first husband?

Mrs. F: He had grown up over in the San Joaquin Valley in Gustine, he and his father did not get along so he left home very young. He was in the trucking business and got acquainted with folks here. After horses were replaced by trucks he came to Lompoc and a man named Chester Case needed some extra trucking, so as Walter had his own truck Mr. Case told him he could help and work hauling beans. One day there was a knock on our door, I went to answer, I was keeping house for my brothers as my mother and father had gone to live in Lompoc, I went to the door and he was looking for my uncle, Ethyl's father, so I told him where to go. There was a dance every Saturday night in Lompoc so when I went to the dance there he was and one thing led to

another and we were married on Nov. 14, 1922. Our first child was born Aug. 19, 1923, this was Charlie, named for his grandfather.

PL: Where did you live?

Mrs. F: We were two years at Jalama and at this time there was a big demand for wood as people were still cooking with wood and out on the Jalama there were so many oak trees, so thick, that Walter gave up farming and started to cut wood. The wood was loaded into box cars on the Jalama siding and it was shipped to Santa Barbara to a company there. There was more money in wood than farming. He also cut wood on the Giorgi Ranch and the Fox place in Happy Canyon. We stayed at the Fox place for ten years clearing land, it is where the Shannons are now. The the Depression came on and we went to Santa Barbara.

End of Side 2, Tape 1

Begin Side 1, Tape 2

Some one wanted some fence built so Walter and Charlie, our son, who was old enough to help had been working on building this fence, and came home in the evening, had supper and he had sat down to take off his shoes before bed and when he got up to walk, he fell down and died. I heard the noise, Dorothy ran in to say Dad was on the floor so we had friends living in the same block, so I

ran over because we did not have a telephone. The Clarks were the neighbors. We lived about a half block from Cottage Hospital, and later they explained to me that the injury he had recieved before when lifting the automobile, had caused blood clots and they had finally hit his heart. It was a tragedy, you don't realize it until it happens to you. We went up and lived with my parents in the San Joaquin Valley, they had moved there in early 1939. My father never retired and lived to be 87. My brothers had taken over the business, when the boys came back from the war, they were natural farmers, and Dad was struggling with the ranch so they went to Patterson, and my brothers farmed there until they retired.

PL: Are there any of your brothers and sisters still living?

Mrs. F: My oldest sister, Estelle is still living at 94, Clara, the next youngest sister lives in Golden City, Nevada. My youngest sister died this past spring. That was a shock, it was so unexpected.

PL: Are you happy here in the mobile home park?

Mrs. F: Oh yes, you can be alone or with people as you wish. I have been here for 13 years. I still drive the car.

PL: Thank you, Mrs. Franzian for this interview.